

CERTIFIED MAIL RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED

SEP 1 8 2013

Wiselet Ked Rouzard

Las Vegas, NV 89122

RE: **MUR 6630**

> Washoe County Republican Party and Lynne Hartung in her official capacity as treasurer Washoe County Republican Central Committee

Nevada Republican Party

Dear Mr. Rouzard:

This is in reference to the complaint you filed with the Federal Election Commission on August 8, 2012. The Commission reviewed the allegations in your complaint, as well as information provided by respondents, and determined to dismiss, as a matter of prosecutorial discretion, the allegations that the Washoe County Republican Party and Lynne Hartung in herofficial capacity as treasurer and the Washoe County Republican Central Committee violated 2 U.S.C. § 433(b) and 11 C.F.R. § 102.2(b). At the same time, the Commission issued a reminder letter to the Washoe County Republican Party and closed the file on September 10, 2013. Additionally, the Commission found no reason to believe that the Nevada Republican Party violated 2 U.S.C. § 433(b) and 11 C.F.R. § 102.2(b). The Factual and Legal Analysis, which more fully explains the basis for the Commission's decision is enclosed.

Documents related to the case will be placed on the public record within 30 days. See Statement of Policy Regarding Disclosure of Closed Enforcement and Related Files, 68 Fed. Reg. 70,426 (Dec. 18, 2003) and Statement of Policy Regarding Placing First General Counsel's Reports on the Public Record, 74 Fed. Reg. 66132 (Dec. 14, 2009).

The Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971, as amended, allows a complainant to seek judicial review of the Commission's dismissal of this action. See 2 U.S.C. § 437g(a)(8).

If you have any questions, please contact Kasey Morgenheim, the attorney assigned to this matter, at (202) 694-1650.

Sincerely,

William Powers

Assistant General Counsel

Enclosures
Factual and Legal Analysis

(1985).

1 2	FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION
3.	FACTUAL AND LEGAL ANALYSIS
4 5 6 7 8	RESPONDENTS: Washoe County Republican Party and Lynne Hartung in her official capacity as treasurer Washoe County Republican Central Committee
9	I. <u>GENERATION OF MATTER</u>
1:0	This matter was generated based by a Complaint filed with the Federal Election
11	Commission ("Commission") by Wiselet Ked Rouzard. See 2 U.S.C. § 437g(a)(1). The
12	Complaint raises the question of whether the Washoe County Republican Party, a party
13	committee located in Reno, Nevada, is affiliated with the Nevada Republican Party (or "State
14	Party"). The Complaint asserts that the Washoe County Republican Party is a county affiliate of
15	the Nevada Republican Party under the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971, as amended (the
16	"Act"), and Commission regulations because it is funded by the State Party and subject to the
17	State Party's management and control. The Washoe County Republican Party maintains that,
18	because it has sole authority over its funds and activities, it is not affiliated with the Nevada
19	Republican Party; however, the Nevada Republican Party asserts that the Washoe County
2 0	Republican Party is affiliated with the State Party.
2.1	The factual record here does not settle whether the Washoe County Republican Party and
22	the Nevada Republican Party are affiliated under the Act and Commission regulations. But ever
23	assuming they are affiliated, neither committee made nor received any excessive contributions.
24	Also, the Washoe County Republican Party intends to terminate. Accordingly, the Commission
25	dismisses the allegations regarding the Washoe County Republican Party and the Washoe
26	Central Committee as a matter of prosecutorial discretion. See Heckler v. Chaney, 470 U.S. 821

1 II. FACTUAL AND LEGAL ANALYSIS

A. Factual Background

3 The Complaint alleges that the Washoe County Republican Party (which is governed by 4 the Washoe County Republican Central Committee ("Washoe Central Committee")) falsely 5 claims that it is not affiliated with the Nevada Republican Party (which is governed by the 6 Nevada Republican Central Committee ("Nevada Central Committee")), 1 Compl. at 1. The 7 Washoe County Republican Party's Statement of Organization, filed with the Commission on 8 June 22, 2012, does not list any affiliated political committees, and an accompanying letter from 9 the Washoe County Republican Party's treasurer Lynne L. Hartung, dated June 25, 2012, 10 confirms that the Washoe County Republican Party will conduct its activity as a federal local party committee that is not affiliated with its state party committee.² See Letter from Lynne L. 11 12 Hartung, Treasurer, Washoe County Republican Party, to Chair Caroline C. Hunter and Vice 13 Chair Ellen L. Weintraub, FEC (Jun. 25, 2012). The letter claims that the Washoe County Republican Party is not funded by, or under the management or control of, the Nevada Central 14 15 Committee, and does not conduct its activity in cooperation, consultation, or concert with, or at 16 the request or suggestion of, the Nevada Central Committee. Id. 17 The Complaint asserts that the Washoc County Republican Party is affillated with the Nevada Republican Party for several reasons. First, the Complaint contends that the Washoe 18 19 County Republican Party received funding from the Nevada Central Committee in 2010 and

Consistent with the Responses of the Washoe County Republican Party and the Nevada Republican Party, the Commission treats the Washoe County Republican Party as interchangeable with the Washoe Central Committee, and the Nevada Republican Party as interchangeable with the Nevada Central Committee.

The Washoe County Republican Party's original Statement of Organization classified it as a state committee of the Republican Party. The Washoe County Republican Party filed Amended Statements of Organization on July 19, 2012, and August 24, 2012. These Amended Statements of Organization reclassify the Washoe County Republican Party as a "subordinate" committee of the Republican Party but maintain that it is not affiliated with the Nevolda Republican Party or any other state party committee.

- 1 2011. Compl. at 1. Second, the Complaint alleges that provisions in the Washoe Central
- 2 Committee and Nevada Republican Party bylaws, which are attached to the Complaint,
- demonstrate that the Washoe County Republican Party is "under the management and control" of
- 4 the State Party. Id. at 1 (emphasis and internal quotation marks omitted). Specifically, the
- 5 Complaint asserts that under Washoe Central Committee bylaws, officers of the Washoe County
- 6 Republican Party are subject to the bylaws of the Nevada Republican Party, the Washoe County
- 7 Republican Party Convention elects delegates to the State Party convention, the Nevada
- 8 Republican Party has the power to require a convention of the Washoe County Republican Party,
- 9 and the Washoe Central Committee elects a delegation to the Nevada Central Committee. Id. at
- 10 1-2. Also, under Nevada Republican Party bylaws, officers and representatives of the Washoe
- 11 Central Committee allegedly exercise political and financial control over the State Party. Id. at
- 12 2. Finally, the Complaint alleges that Dave Buell, Chairman of the Washoe County Republican
- 13 Party, claimed during a conference call that the filing of the Statement of Organization with the
- 14 Commission was a "legal and financial game," and that the Washoe County Republican Party is
- not disaffiliating from the Nevada Republican Party. Id. The Complaint also asserts that Buell
- sought oversight and influence over State Party business during Nevada Republican Party
- 17 Executive Committee calls. Id.
- The Washoe County Republican Party maintains that it is not affiliated with the Nevada
- 19 Central Committee. Its Response asserts that it is governed by separate bylaws as determined by
- 20 the Washoe Central Committee and that it raises and spends funds at its sole discretion. Washoe
- 21 County Republican Party Resp. at 1. For six reasons, the Washoe County Republican Party
- 22 contends that it is not affiliated with the Nevada Central Committee under 11 C.F.R.
- 23 § 110.3(b)(3):

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Id. at 2-3.

- First, it does not receive funds from any other political committee established, financed, maintained or controlled by any party unit.
- Second, although the chairman of the Washoe County Republican Party is a member of the executive board of the Nevada Central Committee under the Nevada Central Committee's bylaws, the Washoe County Republican Party does not operate under the direction of the Nevada Central Committee and has its own officers.
- Third, the Washoe County Republican Party does not consult with the Nevada Central Committee and the Nevada Central Committee has no jurisdiction over how the Washoe County Republican Party spends its funds.
- Fourth, the funds that the Washoe County Republican Party received from the Nevada Central Committee — \$398.60 in November 2010 and \$150 in April 2011 — were specifically allocated through the Nevada Central Committee's "United Republican Fund," whereby donors could allocate 10% of their contributions to the Nevada Central Committee to other Republican organizations or county parties, and were not maintained or financed by the Nevada Central Committee.
- Fifth, the state and federal disclosure reports of the groups show that they receive and expend their funds based on their own fundraising abilities and needs.
- Sixth, the Washoe County Republican Party chairman who sits on the Nevada Central Committee board is one out of twelve board members and only 52 out of more than 360 members of the Nevada Central Committee are from Washoe County.
 - In contrast, the Nevada Republican Party asserts that the Washoe County Republican
- Party is affiliated with the Nevada Central Committee. The Response of the Nevada Republican
- Party states that all counties in Nevada are considered to be affiliated with the Nevada Central
- Committee by the state of Nevada and the FEC. Nevada Republican Party Resp. at 1. The
- 32 Response explains that the Washoe County Republican Party chairman is a voting member of the
 - board of the Nevada Central Committee; the Washoe County Republican Party elects members
 - to attend all meetings of the Nevada Central Committee; and the bylaws of both groups provide
 - for mutual authority with respect to financial decisions. Id. The Nevada Republican Party
 - asserts that it never encouraged any county committee to file with the Commission or to claim to

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be unaffiliated, and was unaware that the Washoe County Republican Party had done so until

2 after the fact. Id. When the Nevada Central Committee learned about the filing, its chairman

contacted the Commission's Information Division regarding affiliation guidelines and was told

4 that the Commission considers the Nevada Central Committee and Washoe County Republican

Party to be "one and the same entity." Id. The Nevada Republican Party claims that it has not

violated the Act and that based on a comparison of Washoe County Republican Party reports to

Nevada Central Committee records, it has not violated any contribution limits. Id. at 1-2.

B. Legal Analysis

Under the Act, political committees "established or financed or maintained or controlled" by the same persons or group of persons are treated as a single political committee for the purposes of the contributions they make or receive. 2 U.S.C. § 441a(a)(5). Such committees are called "affiliated committees," and the names of any affiliated committees must be disclosed on a political committee's Statement of Organization filed with the Commission. 2 U.S.C. § 433(b); 11 C.F.R. §§ 100.5(g), 102.2(b), and 110.3. An exception to this rule exists, however, for a political party's national committee and its state committee, which are not treated as affiliated, and therefore do not share contribution limits. 2 U.S.C. § 441a(a)(5)(B); 11 C.F.R. § 110.3(b)(1)(i) and (ii).

The Act, however, does not exempt political party committees at the county or other subdivisional level of party organization within a State from the affiliation rules of section 441a(a)(5). Moreover, the Commission presumes that the political committees of a state party

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and those of subordinate state party committees³ are affiliated, absent a showing of lack of

2 funding and coordination between the political committees. 11 C.F.R. § 110.3(b)(3)(i)-(ii).

For example, in Advisory Opinion 1978-09 (Republican State Central Committee of

4 Iowa), the Commission determined that the presumption of affiliation would be unwarranted

5 where various county committees were, by statute, separate and independent from the

6 Republican State Central Committee of Iowa; the groups had separate bylaws, constitutions, and

7 funding aside from limited joint fundraising; and the state committee had no influence over how

the county committees spent their funds.

The record here is unclear as to whether the Washoe County Republican Party overcame the presumption of affiliation with the Nevada Republican Party. The Washoe County Republican Party received a small amount of funding, approximately \$550, from the Nevada Central Committee in 2010 and 2011; the Washoe County Republican Party contends, however, that this funding came from donors allocating a portion of their contributions, and not from the Nevada Central Committee directly. The bylaws of the organizations also call for overlapping leadership that may result in consultation regarding the groups' activities and expenditures, but the Washoe County Republican Party claims that it has sole authority over how it spends its funds.

Disclosure reports filed by the Washoe County Republican Party and the Nevada

Republican Party, however, confirm the State Party's assertion that even if the committees were

A subordinate committee is "any organization that [is] at the level of city, county, neighborhood, ward, district, precinct, or any other subdivision of a State or any organization under the control or direction of the State committee, and is directly or indirectly established, financed, maintained, or controlled by the State, district, or local committee." 11 C.F.R. § 100.14(c).

Although the Washoe County Republican Party did not provide any records to buttress this assertion, funds received through this type of allocation may be akin to the joint fundraising referenced in Advisory Opinion 1978-09, and therefore not necessarily considered funds received from another political party.

MUR 6630 (Washoe County	Republican	Party,	et-al.)
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- 1 affiliated and shared a contribution limit, they did not make excessive contributions to any
- 2 candidates, nor did any contributors to the committees make contributions in excess of the
- 3 combined limit for state and local party committees. Further, it does not appear that the Washoe
- 4 County Republican Party intends to continue its operations as a federal committee, as its
- 5 treasurer attempted to file Termination Reports with the Commission on February 20, 2013,
- 6 March 20, 2013, April 15, 2013, and May 17, 2013, and the Committee has no remaining cash
- 7 on hand.
- 8 Notwithstanding the uncertain factual record here, the Commission dismisses as a matter
- 9 of prosecutorial discretion the Complaint's allegations that the Washoe County Republican Party
- and Lynne Hartung in her official capacity as treasurer and the Washoe County Republican
- 11 Central Committee violated 2 U.S.C. § 433(b) and 11 C.F.R. § 102.2(b). See Heckler v. Chaney,
- 12 470 U.S. 821 (1985).

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The factual record here does not settle whether the Washoe County Republican Party and the Nevada Republican Party are affiliated under the Act and Commission regulations. But even assuming they are affiliated, neither committee made nor received any excessive contributions.

Also, the Washoe County Republican Party intends to terminate. Accordingly, the Commission finds no reason to believe that the Nevada Republican Party violated 2 U.S.C. § 433(b) and 11 C.F.R. § 102.2(b).

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II. <u>FACTUAL AND LEGAL ANALYSIS</u>

A. Factual Background

3 The Complaint alleges that the Washoe County Republican Party (which is governed by the Washoe County Republican Central Committee ("Washoe Central Committee")) falsely 4 claims that it is not affiliated with the Nevada Republican Party (which is governed by the 5 6 Nevada Republican Central Committee ("Nevada Central Committee")). Compl. at 1. The 7 Washoe County Republican Party's Statement of Organization, filed with the Commission on 8 June 22, 2012, does not list any affiniated political committees, and an accompanying letter from 9 the Washoe County Republican Party's treasurer Lynne L. Hartung, dated June 25, 2012, 10 confirms that the Washoe County Republican Party will conduct its activity as a federal local party committee that is not affiliated with its state party committee.² See Letter from Lynne L. 11 Hartung, Treasurer, Washoe County Republican Party, to Chair Caroline C. Hunter and Vice 12 13 Chair Ellen L. Weintraub, FEC (Jun. 25, 2012). The letter claims that the Washoe County Republican Party is not funded by, or under the management or control of, the Nevada Central 14 Committee, and does not conduct its activity in cooperation, consultation, or concert with, or at 15 16 the request or suggestion of, the Nevada Central Committee. Id. The Complaint asserts that the Washoe County Republican Party is affiliated with the 17 18 Nevada Republican Party for several reasons. First, the Complaint contends that the Washoe 19 County Republican Party received funding from the Nevada Central Committee in 2010 and

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Id. at 2-3.

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- asserts that it never encouraged any county committee to file with the Commission or to claim to

be unaffiliated, and was unaware that the Washoe County Republican Party had done so until
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contacted the Commission's Information Division regarding affiliation guidelines and was told

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- 2 candidates, nor did any contributors to the committees make contributions in excess of the
- 3 combined limit for state and local party committees. Further, it does not appear that the Washoe
- 4 County Republican Party intends to continue its operations as a federal committee, as its
- 5 treasurer attempted to file Termination Reports with the Commission on February 20, 2013,
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- 8 Accordingly, the Commission finds no reason to believe that the Nevada Republican
- 9 Party violated 2 U.S.C. § 433(b) and 11 C.F.R. § 102.2(b).